

Further, similar legislation has passed the Senate in each of the last three Congresses. The proposed wilderness includes significant low-level elevation wilderness that is home to important fish and wildlife populations. This new wilderness would link with previously designated wilderness in the national forest and would be within a few hours' distance from half of the population of Washington State.

The Wild Sky Wilderness has significant State and local support in Washington. State officials, local elected officials, businesses, and church groups have all gone on record supporting the wilderness designation.

Mr. Speaker, the time has come to designate this wilderness. I would like to commend my colleague, Representative LARSEN, and other Members of the Washington delegation for their perseverance in seeking a wilderness designation for this magnificent area.

We support passage of H.R. 886 and urge its adoption today.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. PEARCE. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I would like to begin by complimenting Representative LARSEN for the hard work he has put into this legislation and for proposing wilderness only in his district. This would seem to be a basic sensible courtesy, but seems to be lost on some of his fellow Democrats.

With that said, the minority is opposed to this bill. During the markup in the Natural Resources Committee, the minority pledged its willingness to work with the majority, but this offer must have fallen upon deaf ears. In the future, we hope the majority can at least contact us after we make such a gesture.

Much of the area that would be designated by this bill does not qualify as wilderness. The 1964 Wilderness Act states explicitly that wilderness areas should be primitive and untrammelled by man. Yet the Wild Sky Wilderness Act includes several roads, a bridge, numerous culverts, and other man-made developments.

The proposal also includes areas with mining patents and lands identified by the Forest Service for timber harvest. Moreover, according to the Forest Service, road corridors within the wilderness are too narrow to ensure proper road maintenance and safe passage by travelers. Without sufficient corridors, landslides or other natural disturbances could permanently block or destroy the road.

Restrictions associated with the wilderness areas prohibit the use of mechanized or motorized activities, which would surely be needed to prepare a road. It is disingenuous for the majority to tout the public's ability to visit the Wild Sky area without protecting one of the main roads that would allow access to the Wild Sky area.

We are willing to work with the majority and have indicated our willing-

ness to do so. In the future we hope that the majority would work with us.

Wilderness areas affect local communities, are permanent, and many times have ramifications or unintended consequences. We ask the majority to take these bills seriously and study them in good faith before hurriedly passing them on to the House floor.

Mr. Speaker, I have no additional speakers, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to my colleague, the sponsor of this legislation before us today, the gentleman from Washington (Mr. LARSEN).

Mr. LARSEN of Washington. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of creating the first wilderness area for Washington State in over 20 years. The Wild Sky Wilderness will be unique, protecting 106,000 acres of the most pristine forests and streams in my district, while providing a clean and accessible place to hike, hunt, and fish.

The Wild Sky Wilderness Act has been carefully crafted, and it reflects years of community input. It will protect the peaks, forests and lakes of the Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest, as well as thousands of acres of lower-elevation forest and salmon-bearing streams. Wild Sky will protect more lower-elevation acres than any other wilderness area in Washington State, bringing wilderness closer to our communities and benefiting Washington families and businesses for generations to come.

Congress passed the last national forest wilderness act in 1984 when a bipartisan effort brought a bill to President Ronald Reagan for signature that created, among other areas, the Henry M. Jackson Wilderness. This Wild Sky Wilderness Act has strong bipartisan support as well. This bill has received strong support from local Republican and Democratic legislators, former Republican Governors, and our current Democratic Governor, Christine Gregoire. Additionally, State legislators and the Snohomish County Executive have expressed their support.

The Wild Sky Wilderness Act has local support. The former mayor of the town of Index, the closest local government to the proposed wilderness, has said that "the Wild Sky Wilderness will be the best thing that ever happened in the valley." The cities of Monroe and Snohomish, both located on Highway 2 on the way to the Wild Sky, have passed resolutions of support.

The Wild Sky Wilderness Act has strong business support. REI, Inc., the Nation's largest consumer cooperative with its focus on the outdoor adventure, is an endorser, as are David and Lynn Meier, co-owners of A Stone's Throw Bed and Breakfast and A Cabin in the Sky vacation rental just down the way from the wild Skykomish wilderness. Additionally, the Snohomish County Economic Development Council supports this proposal.

This bill again marks the summit of a 5-year process of inclusiveness and

compromise. My staff and the staff of Senator PATTY MURRAY, who is the bill's prime sponsor in the Senate, have worked over the last 5 years to address local concerns. As a result of this community input, the original idea of a 120,000-acre proposal has been whittled down to the 106,000-acre bill that we are voting on today.

The spirit of compromise has been a constant in this bill's development over the last 5 years. This past winter, as an example, massive floods altered the path of the Skykomish River, displacing and destroying parts of the primary road that snakes through the proposed wilderness area. Immediately, Senator MURRAY and I brought together Snohomish County, the Forest Service and local advocates to responsibly adjust the boundaries of the proposed wilderness to ensure that the road could be repaired and remain open in the future.

The spirit of compromise has earned the support of groups such as the Washington Sea Plane Pilots Association, local tribes, the Wild Steelhead Coalition, the Back Country Horsemen and the Washington Coalition of Citizens with Disabilities. Additionally, my office has received approximately 4,000 letters and e-mails in support of the Wild Sky and a petition with over 10,000 names in support. Over 5 years of collaboration and compromise has resulted in a bill that has gained broad support in the best tradition of past Washington State wilderness areas. It is time to create the next generation of Washington State wilderness.

Finally, I want to thank Chairman RAHALL and his staff, Jim Zoia and Rick Healy, for their tremendous help and unwavering support for the Wild Sky Wilderness Act.

Mr. Speaker, in conclusion, I would like to submit the following names for the RECORD. These people conceived, fine-tuned, negotiated, along with many other people, the boundaries of the Wild Sky. Without their tireless effort, we would not be here today, and we owe them our thanks as well.

Mike Town, John Leary, Larry Romans, Tom Uniack, Rick McGuire, Mark Lawler, Harry Romberg, Norm Winn, Don Parks, Charlie Raines, Jon Owen, Michael Carroll, Jill McKinnie, Brandon Hall, Christian Gunter, Jasper MacSarrow, Louis Lauter, Doug Clapp, Abbey Levenshush, Charla Newman, Amanda Mahnke, Kim Johnston, Jeff Bjornstad, Jaime Shimek, Karen Waters, John Engber, Rachelle Hein, Cindy Lewis, Christy Gullion, Nalani Askov, Michelle Ackerman, Jennifer Ekstrom, Doug Scott, Bill Arthur, Doug Walker, Bill & Sue Cross, Bob Hubbard, Conway Leovy, Mark Heckert, Kem Hunter, Aaron Reardon, Peter Jackson, Tracy Nagelbush, Brian Bonlender, Michelle Koppes, Dave Sommers, Amit Ronen, Carrie Desmond.

Finally I would like to thank the late Karen M. Fant, 1949–2006. Throughout her adult life Karen spurred thousands of citizens across the State of Washington to speak up for the protection of wild places and wilderness. Early on Karen recognized the need to bring together and involve local people in efforts to protect wilderness. To do so she cofounded